

OF BARN SWALLOWS AND DROSERAS

by Owen Tallman
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In early May this year I returned from an early morning errand to find the greenhouse quite warm from the bright sun. I went in to see how everyone was doing and found that a barn swallow had gotten in and was sitting on top of one of the structural members.

When he saw me he took off towards the bright end of the greenhouse, and I saw that he had fallen for the light-window effect, for the way out was not towards the light of the sun but back through the dark shed on the north side of the greenhouse through which he had entered. The light end offered no escape; only the dark shed did. The shed functions as a kind of winter airlock and general workspace.

I tried a few times to chase him out through the shed but he persistently swooped around my gesturing arms toward the light, consistently finding no way out there. I thought momentarily of the similarity between this situation and that of a flying insect inside a window, or inside the hood of a *Sarracenia minor*. In the house, I could either open the window or swat the bug. Here, as inside a pitcher plant, there was only one way out. It did not help me to try to imagine what I would do inside a pitcher plant, so I forgot about it and went outside where I found two large pieces of cardboard. I thought with these I could make it clear to the bird what he had to do by putting a barrier up wherever he tried to fly past me in the wrong direction.

Now this greenhouse is set up in several levels, each consisting of a pair of rows of plastic flats (or trays) about 12" x 24", suspended on wooden frames with a walkway in between. Chasing this poor bird, who eyed me in terror and puffed and panted in the heat, I was standing on the frame/bench structure about three feet off the ground, waving my cardboard shields above my head so that I blocked the walkway with my body and the passage above my head with the cardboards. Faced with this the bird plunged headlong into a flat of about 70 rather large narrow-leaf *Drosera capensis* and stopped.

I was about to grab him when I realized that he wasn't going anywhere. He had landed all right, with his wings spread, but that was what did it--the combined sticking power or this army of sundews had got him wing, foot and tail. If he thought these plants would provide a landing platform he misjudged, though he was acting in panic. I watched him struggling for a few moments to be certain that he was caught then picked him up, slippery and tacky, and tossed him out the door. He flew straight away.

I suppose that I might be accused of missing an opportunity to document the animal-trapping and digesting ability of these large South African sundews, but it was my fault the bird got stuck, and in fact the whole episode arose from my interference, since in all the years the swallows had lived in these buildings they'd had no reason to expect to end up in a greenhouse/trap after flying into a dark shed.

I don't know if the bird could have escaped, but having seen similar groups of plants in inadvertent cooperation capture and literally draw and quarter very large moths, I had no inclination to test the idea. Besides, I couldn't see myself explaining with any aplomb the feathery remains on this group of plants to visitors. People have enough strange ideas about CP as it is.

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CARNIVOROUS PLANT COMPANIES

by Glenn Claudi-Magnussen
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There are many CP companies, which vary greatly in quality, price, etc. I have received plants and catalogs from some of these companies, and here are my reactions.

World Insectivorous Plants (Rt. 1, Box 338S, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420). This company is one of the best. The plants are all greenhouse grown, which lessens the strain on the plants in their natural environment. All the plants are very healthy and are rather mature (i.e. no seedlings). Many are blooming or ready to. They are also very prompt in sending the plants. The prices are very good, much better than for most plants taken from the wild. They carry *Sarracenia* as well as the plants mentioned in CPN VI(1):20. Their selection is very large.

Sun Dew (or Sun Dew Environments) (P.O. Box 111, Denver, NY 12421). This company is also very good, and they *do* grow their own plants. As with WIP, the quality, price and shipping are very good. The only disadvantage is that the plants are often younger and smaller, but don't let this stop you from buying from them, because they are a good company. About four times a year this company sends updates, increasing the number of available species. They are now limited to *Drosera*, *Byblis* and *Utricularia*, but soon hope to get other genera.

Peter Pauls Nurseries (Darcey Road, Canandaigua, NY 14424). This company offers a wide variety of plants. They are also the only company I know that sells CP seeds. The plants are in good condition, but they are rather expensive.

Edelweiss Gardens (54 Robbinsville-Allentown Road, Robbinsville, NJ 08691). This company carries only about 10 species, all of which are expensive.

Arthur E. Algrove (North Wilmington, MA 01887). Again there are only a few species sold by this company. They do not carry *Darlingtonia* or *Drosera*, as CPN VI(1):20 says. The plants they do have, though, are very inexpensive.

Harold Welsh (Black Copper Kits, 266 Kipp St., Hackensack, NJ 07601). This company has some of the American CP, especially *Sarracenia*. The plants are in very good condition and are rather inexpensive.

Carolina Exotic Gardens (Box 1492, Greenville, NC 27834). This company sells a wide variety of plants. Aside from the genera listed in this year's CPN, they also sell *Nepenthes khasiana*, many *Drosera*, some *Pinguicula*, and *Utricularia*. The prices range from very expensive to very cheap.

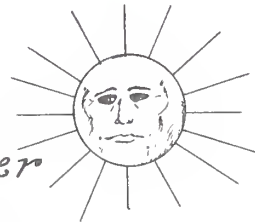
Conclusion

All of these companies have advantages (some more than others). When looking for a plant, I suggest going to World Insectivorous Plants or Sun Dew. All of the other companies sell plants taken from the wild, and are generally not as good. There are enough greenhouse grown plants available or soon to be available to satisfy most CP collectors.

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BUILDING YOUR OWN *Solar Water Distiller*

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When I moved my carnivorous plants out of the sealed aquaria and into a small greenhouse, I knew there would be both advantages and disadvantages.

On the bright side, I could give them more sun because the greenhouse was ventilated; they would also be able to catch more insects by themselves. I found, however, the major disadvantage was that they needed much more water than before because of the added ventilation.

Unfortunately, the water here in Southern California is very hard and mineral-laden, so I was forced to buy distilled water which becomes slightly expensive at 10¢ a half gallon, not to mention the inconvenience of constantly getting it. Distilling my own water seemed to be the answer, but the question was how.

One possibility was to boil tap water on the stove and condense it, but, being somewhat energy conscious, I knew there must be a better way. That's when I decided to invent a solar water distiller that would be simple to build and maintain.

The idea I hit upon utilized the old aquaria I had left over. I remembered how the moisture inside the aquaria would condense on the sides and drip down when the sun hit them. That is the basis for my design.

The distiller consists of a 10-gallon aquarium propped up about 10° on one end. This will let the condensed water fall down to the lower end of the aquarium. A black 8" x 10" photographic developing tray full of tap water is put inside the aquarium and leveled. A piece of glass is then put over the top to seal the aquarium. The sealed aquarium is then positioned so that it will receive as much direct sun as possible.